

# NU freshmen promoted to varsity workouts

By Todd Cooper  
Staff Reporter

Learning the system is the top priority of two Nebraska freshmen after being thrust into varsity football action during fall drills.

Rob Zatechka, a 6-foot-6, 288-pound offensive lineman, and Johnnie Mitchel, a 6-5, 250-pound tight end, have been separated from their junior varsity teammates and are working out with the varsity. Seven other newcomers -- Derek Brown, Corey Dixon, Calvin Jones, Brended Stai, Zach Wiegert, Vince Hawkins and Kenny Wilhite -- also were promoted to the varsity.

With injuries and illness hitting the offensive line hard in the first few days of workouts, Zatechka quickly was moved up.

"It's really complicated with all the line calls, you constantly have to think on the move," Zatechka said. "It can get pretty stressful."

"I was a little surprised to be working out with the varsity so early. I guess I mainly expected to get knocked around a little bit on varsity, sooner or later. It's just common knowledge that at Nebraska, linemen start at the bottom and work up." way up."

Considering where he is, though, the transition has not been that much of an eye-opening experience.

"The expectation (of playing for Nebraska) alone does a pretty good job of preparing you," he said. "Like everybody says, this is big-time, so I knew it would be tough."

He said he came prepared with a "pretty tough preseason conditioning," routine. It paid off as he set a performance index record for a lineman his size during preseason testing.

"Physically, practices haven't been too bad," he said. "I think physically I'm ready to play. But mentally it might take another year or two."

Mitchell agreed. "I'm still learning most of the plays," he said "Once I feel comfort-

able, I feel I'll play better. "I think what I have to do is just concentrate on learning the system. After that my ability will just take over."

To check out just how much ability he has, Husker coaches tried him at wingback after junior Nate Turner went down for six to eight weeks with a broken collarbone. After one day there, he was moved back to tight end.

"I'm glad they gave me a look at wingback," he said. "But I just needed to learn the system at tight end."

"Once I get the system down, I'd like to play both. I'd love to play wingback. The main thing was I didn't know what I was doing out there."

With the help of receivers coach Ron Brown, Mitchell said he is getting the plays down at tight end.

"Coach Brown is one of the greatest coaches around," he said. "If you make a wrong step or something, he's right there on you. He really cares about his athletes. . . you don't want to let him down."

Making the adjustment from high school to college ball hasn't been too bad, Mitchell said.

"The difference is the speed and size level," he said.

"You can't just get out and flat-out beat someone. At most, you just have a step (in pass routes).

"In high school, I was the man. When the game was on the line, the coach put the ball in my hands and I usually delivered."

He would like to deliver right away in college ball, he said.

"I hope I'm not redshirted," he said. "I'd like to help out this year, but I guess it'll just depend on how well I pick things up."

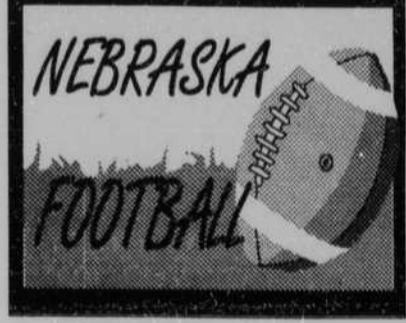
Zatechka, on the other hand, thinks he'll be redshirted to allow him time to grasp the system.

"Right now, I really have no long-term goals," he said. "I think I'll probably be redshirted this year. That's usually how all the other linemen develop."

## JV Schedule

Coach: Bill Weber  
1989 record: 3-1-1

Sept. 7 Snow Junior College	1 p.m.
Sept. 24 Bethany JV	1 p.m.
Oct. 5 Air Force JV	2 p.m.
Oct. 19 Iowa Central Junior College	1 p.m.
Nov. 2 Waldorf Junior College	1 p.m.



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